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UNITED STATES ARMS CONTROL AND DISARMAMENT AGENCY

December 18, 1963

MEMORANDUM FOR THE MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE OF PRINCIPALS

SUBJECT: U. S. Position Paper on Observation Posts

The attached paper, submitted for your approval, sets forth a proposed US position on Observation Posts for use in consultations in NATO and thereafter, in light of those consultations, for discussion with the Soviets in the ENDC at Geneva.

I note that recent DOD studies suggest that certain types of reciprocal troop withdrawals from both parts of Germany might be militarily advantageous to us in conjunction with observation posts. ACDA is strongly interested in exploring the possible advantages of such withdrawals and the matter is under study with the aim of preparing a proposal for future consideration.

However, I think it essential to proceed separately on these possibly related issues for the following reasons:

(a) It is the view of ACDA that observation posts would have significant military value as a separate measure.

(b) Although such posts would probably have greater value in conjunction with troop reductions, the question of troop withdrawals is bound to give rise to difficult political/military issues in NATO. To raise the question now is likely to prove so disruptive as to risk NATO rejection of observation posts even as a separate measure. Moreover, NATO approval of an OP system would facilitate favorable consideration at a later date of the possibility of further improving European security by bringing about some Soviet troop withdrawals.

(c) In the face of mounting Soviet charges that the GCD negotiations are getting nowhere because of Western negativism we are in great need of realistic proposals of possible mutual interest which can serve to keep the disarmament talks going in the ENDC.

(d) Observation posts were initially proposed by the Soviets and have recently been revived by them as a possible

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subject for negotiation. In the ENDC the US has stated its willingness to consider observation posts as a separate measure and President Kennedy's speech in the General Assembly underscored our interest in this measure. It has been cited by other Western leaders as a promising measure for negotiation. We can hardly avoid the issue at the ENDC session beginning January 21, 1964, but if it is discussed in any detail we shall need a more completely elaborated proposal than is available in DMP 17/1 of April 11, 1962.

I would also stress that initial consideration of observation posts as a separate measure would not prejudice a future decision or proposal on troop withdrawals. It will take time to achieve a NATO consensus and a lengthy series of discussions with the Soviets will be needed just to ascertain if there is sufficient mutual interest and common ground for a possible agreement. The presentation set forth in the attached paper is designed to enable us to outline the full range of capabilities of an observation posts system--including capabilities we believe would be desirable in connection with any foreseeable troop withdrawals. The full system presented, however, would almost certainly not be negotiable outside the context of troop withdrawals. It is included in the proposed initial presentation to avoid jeopardizing our position later if discussion of troop withdrawals is to be introduced.

The method of presentation chosen in the paper is designed to enable us to open discussions with the USSR on a flexible basis, without committing ourselves at an early stage to what might constitute a minimum acceptable system. This method should also facilitate the achievement of a NATO consensus favorable to such discussions while avoiding the problem of trying to achieve allied agreement on a specific system before we have had an opportunity to test Soviet intentions.

The various components of the system described are derived from JCSM-773-63. One component of the JCSM study, ground mobility outside agreed observation post areas, has been discarded as non-negotiable and likely if introduced to frustrate any negotiation with the Soviets. A modified form of aerial surveillance is retained primarily to enable us to illustrate its capability and how its absence would affect an observation post system. It is the view of ACDA that this component would be valuable, but not essential. Accordingly,

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we should not make it a condition to our agreement to an otherwise acceptable system and should not press for its consideration if that would jeopardize the continuance of negotiations.

The paper has been prepared in a form suitable for release to our allies. Before it could be presented to NATO it would have to be supplemented with policy guidance to USRO dealing with various problems likely to arise in the NATO consultations.

That guidance would, inter alia, cover the following ground:

(a) It will stress the need for a frank but realistic appraisal of the political implications of the Soviet proposed link to troop reductions in, and the "de-nuclearization" of, Germany. It will stress the importance of a deliberate approach to the negotiations, allowing us time to probe for confirmation of recent informal indications that the Soviets may now be prepared to consider observation posts linked only to a "freeze" on nuclear weapons and foreign forces currently in Germany. The concept of a "freeze" would, if confirmed, still create probably insurmountable difficulties (if it involves verification and if it is aimed at preventing the creation of an MLF) but it would at least permit the talks to proceed from the existing situation. The guidance will also deal with the German concern that any system of posts is likely to further the Soviet aim of consolidating the status quo by pointing out that a militarily useful system would strengthen European security which should, in turn, create a better atmosphere in which to work for the reunification of Germany.

(b) Taking into account FRG objections to having any posts in East or West Germany (to avoid any dealings with East Germany or any enhancement of the status of the GDR), it will present a justification for alternatives ranging from having no posts in Germany (and relying instead on the existing military missions) to having posts there manned only by Four Power personnel. It will also justify attaching Four Power liaison observers to divisional headquarters of Soviet and Allied forces in lieu of any observation posts in Germany. As regards French objections, which may or may not be overcome even if German cooperation is obtained, it will suggest the possibility of posts confined to the key French ports and road and rail crossings along the Franco-German border.

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(c) It will stress the desirability of seeking a generally favorable NAC consensus rather than attempting to secure agreement on the specifics of a desirable system--a consensus allowing us adequate flexibility to explore a full range of capabilities with the Soviets while leaving us free, if later deemed mutually desirable, to accept as limited a system as would still have significant military value.

(d) Finally, it will stress the need for public recognition of the limitations of any system in order to avoid creating a false sense of security.

*William C. Foster*

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